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The Booking-Flow Checklist that stops drop-off, from browser to booked

This is the checklist we use when we take on a UK service business that lives or dies on booked appointments. It is built around one plain idea: the gap between "found you" and "booked" is where a site lets people go. Someone lands on your site ready to commit and meets a form buried below the fold, or a price that changes at the last step. Close that gap and a plain, quick website does the rest.

A GUIDE FOR UK OPERATORS

Author
Jordan Gilbert, Founder · VerySEOly

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Audience
UK service businesses that take appointments, consultants, studios, clinics, coaches, therapists, bookkeepers and appointment-led firms.

The checklist is opinionated. Where we say "do this", we mean we would not let a service business go live without it. We name no booking system and quote none of their prices: which one fits depends on how you sell your time, and what each charges is its own to state. Where the source of a rule is quoted, it is listed at the end with the day we checked it.

The point of every item below is the same: make the path from browser to booked as short as it can be, and make sure the booking, the deposit and the client stay yours.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The checklist at a glance
2. The booking flow, where the money leaks
3. Deposits and no-shows
4. Getting found near you
5. The website itself
6. Reminders, rebooking and reviews
7. What we do NOT do, the anti-checklist
8. Sources + further reading

01 The checklist at a glance

#	ITEM	LIVES UNDER
1	A visible "Book" button on every page	Booking flow
2	Booking above the fold on the home and service pages	Booking flow
3	Service, full price and length shown before the booking step	Booking flow
4	Live slots shown, not "enquire for availability"	Booking flow
5	Booking asks for the minimum fields, nothing extra	Booking flow
6	A short enquiry form kept only for open questions	Booking flow
7	A deposit or card on file, where it suits the service	Deposits
8	Cancellation window stated in plain words	Deposits
9	Deposit rule set per service, not one-size-fits-all	Deposits
10	Booking calendar synced to the device you actually use	Deposits
11	Google Business Profile claimed and verified	Getting found

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#	ITEM	LIVES UNDER
12	Primary category set to what you actually do	Getting found
13	Booking link connected on the Google profile	Getting found
14	Site is built for a phone and quick on a patchy signal	Website
15	Name, address, phone consistent and crawlable	Website
16	Services and prices as text, not an image	Website
17	Real photos and real reviews on the page	Website
18	A reminder sent before every appointment	Reminders
19	A rebooking nudge when a client is due back	Reminders
20	A review request after the appointment	Reminders
21	The booking, deposit and client list owned by you	Ownership
22	LocalBusiness structured data on the site	Getting found

02 The booking flow, where the money leaks

For a service business the website is not the product. The booking is. Everything on the page is either moving someone towards a confirmed slot or getting in the way of it. Three places come up again and again, so fix those first.

2.1 Put a "Book" button on every page

Do not hide the booking behind a menu item three scrolls down. Someone who is ready to commit should never have to hunt for the way to do it. A visible "Book" button belongs in the header of every page and repeated at the foot of each service page. Keep the taps between "this looks right" and "booked" few.

2.2 Book above the fold, not below it

On the home page and on each service page, the way to book should be visible without scrolling. If the first thing a phone shows is a hero image and three paragraphs before any booking action, you have buried the one thing the page exists for. Lead with what you do, who it is for, and the button.

2.3 Show the service, price and length before the booking step

Put what the service is, what it costs and how long it takes on the service page, in plain text, before the booking button, not in a reply to an email they have to send first. The price shown is the full price: the CMA says businesses must show all unavoidable charges in the headline price

from the outset, and in April 2026 it fined the AA £4.2 million after a mandatory £3 booking fee at its AA and BSM driving schools was not included in the upfront price. Any fee the customer cannot avoid belongs inside the figure; an optional extra is shown as optional.

2.4 Show live slots, not "enquire for availability"

"Enquire for availability" is a form by another name, and it makes the person who wanted to book at 9pm wait for you. Show the slots you actually have free and let them pick one. If you genuinely need to vet an enquiry first, say so plainly and keep that path short, but default to letting people book themselves.

2.5 Ask for the minimum, keep a form only for real questions

Ask for what you need to hold the slot and no more, plus the two or three questions the first session needs answered. Keep a short contact form on the site for genuine open-ended questions, the ones a diary slot cannot answer, but do not route a straightforward booking through it. A booking that confirms itself beats an enquiry that sits in your inbox.

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03 Deposits and no-shows

A no-show is time you cannot resell at short notice: the room, the hour and the preparation, spent on nobody. A deposit or a card held at booking, paired with a cancellation window stated plainly, is the usual answer. Its terms are yours to set, and the law has a say in how far they go.

3.1 A deposit or a card, where it suits the service

Set a deposit to whatever suits the service. A longer or higher-value appointment may justify a deposit that a quick, low-risk one does not, and a reminder may be enough for the short ones.

3.2 State the cancellation window in plain words

Pair the deposit with a clear rule, for example "refundable with 24 hours' notice", written beside the booking step, on the service page and in the confirmation where your booking system lets you word it. No customer should meet the rule for the first time on the day they cancel.

3.3 Keep the terms fair

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 has a list of terms that may be regarded as unfair, and two of them are about money taken on a booking. One requires a customer who cancels to pay a disproportionately high sum in compensation, or to pay for services which have not been supplied. The other lets the business keep what the customer has paid when the customer pulls out, without the customer receiving an equivalent amount when it is the business that cancels. The amounts and the wording are yours to decide, so take advice on them.

3.4 Set the rule per service, not once for everything

You do not have to treat every appointment the same. Protect the longer or higher-value slots with a deposit and leave shorter ones open, where your booking system lets you set the rule per service.

3.5 What to ask a booking system before you choose

We do not sell a booking system and we name none here. Whichever you look at, ask it:

ASK	WHY IT MATTERS
What it charges, and for what	A monthly plan, a fee on card payments and a charge for customers its marketplace sends you are different costs
Whether deposits can be set per service	So the right rule applies to the right appointment
Whether your customer list can be exported	So the list stays yours if you move
Whether it embeds on your own pages	So the customer books on your site, under your name
Whether it syncs with the calendar you use	So a personal appointment blocks the slot
Whether it sends reminders, and in whose name	So the reminder comes from your business

Check each answer on the supplier's own pages before you commit.

3.6 Sync the calendar you actually look at

The booking system must land in whatever diary you genuinely use: your phone calendar, the studio iPad, Google Calendar. A booking that does not appear in front of the person doing the work is a double-booking waiting to happen. Sync once, then trust one diary.

04 Getting found near you

Many people meet a local business on its Google listing before they reach its site, so the free Google Business Profile is part of the job, not an afterthought.

4.1 Claim and verify the profile

Search your business name on Google. If a listing exists that you do not control, claim it at **business.google.com**. If none exists, create one, then verify it by the method Google offers you. Verifying is what puts the profile in your hands. Google says that once verified you gain ownership of your Business Profile and can make sure your business information is accurate. Anyone can suggest an edit to a profile, so check it regularly and keep it saying what your site says.

4.2 Set the right primary category

Set your **primary category to what you actually do**, the closest match Google offers for your service. Google says its local results are mainly based on relevance, distance and popularity, describes relevance as how well a profile matches what someone is searching for, and says businesses with complete and accurate information are more likely to show up in local search results. It also says there is no way to request or pay for a better local ranking. Add secondary categories only where they are genuinely true. Do not stuff categories you do not serve.

4.3 Connect the booking link

Connect your booking link on the profile so a client can go from the Google listing straight into your booking system. A listing that ends in a phone number leaves the person who wanted to book without ringing nowhere to go.

4.4 Keep the details exact

Opening hours precise, with special hours for bank holidays set ahead of time. Services listed with prices where you can. Real photos of the place, the team and the work. A profile that answers "when", "how much" and "what does it look like" saves people phoning to ask.

4.5 Add LocalBusiness structured data

Add **LocalBusiness structured data** (schema.org markup) to the site. It is a small block of machine-readable code that hands Google your name, address, phone, hours and price range in a format it can trust. It does not guarantee a ranking. State in it only what the page visibly says.

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05 The website itself

The website's job is narrower than people think: confirm you are real, say what you do and what it costs, prove it with real work, and get the client into the booking flow. Build it for the phone first.

5.1 Built for a phone, quick on a patchy signal

Assume a phone on a patchy connection, not a desktop on fibre. Compress the images, keep the scripts light, and test it on an actual phone away from your wifi. A page that is slow to load keeps people waiting for the booking button.

5.2 NAP consistent and crawlable

Your **Name, Address and Phone** must appear as real text on the site, commonly in the footer, spelled and formatted identically to your Google profile. Not baked into an image: it has to be readable as text. Keep it the same on the site, the profile and every listing.

5.3 Services and prices as text

List services and prices as actual text on a page, not as a photo of a price list. Text can be read by Google and by screen readers; a JPEG cannot, and it ages badly the day you change a price. It is also the information a visitor needs before they will book.

5.4 Real photos and real reviews

Use your own place, your own people and your own work. Quote reviews as customers wrote them, linked to where they were left, so a visitor sees genuine proof before the booking step.

5.5 Simple navigation

A service-business site needs maybe five things: home, services and prices, about, book, contact. Resist the urge to add more. Every extra menu item is one more decision between a visitor and a booking.

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06 Reminders, rebooking and reviews

The booking is the start, not the end. Three quiet automations, where your booking system offers them, save you chasing anyone.

6.1 A reminder before every appointment

An automatic reminder the evening before gives someone who cannot make it the chance to cancel in time, so the slot goes back on the site for someone else.

6.2 A rebooking nudge when a client is due back

For any service people come back for, a quiet nudge when they are due to return goes to someone who already knows you.

6.3 A review request after the appointment

Send a review request after the visit, the same way every time, and never offer anything for it. Google says more reviews and positive ratings can help a business's local ranking.

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07 What we do NOT do, the anti-checklist

A few opinionated negatives. These are positions we take when building the service business's presence.

- **We do not bury the booking behind a contact form.** For anything you would put in a diary, a booking that confirms itself beats an enquiry that sits in an inbox. The form is kept for genuine open questions, not for a straightforward slot.
- **We do not take a share of a booking.** The booking system is yours, on your own account and billed by its supplier. If you use a marketplace too, that is your call: ask it what it charges for each customer it sends you, and whether your customer list can be exported.
- **We do not over-build the booking.** If a consultant takes a handful of appointments a week, a clean slot-picker beats a heavyweight system nobody wants to manage. Match the tool to the business.
- **We do not write, buy or filter reviews.** Reviews are quoted as customers wrote them, linked to where they were left.

- **We do not use auto-playing audio or video.** It uses mobile data, it surprises someone glancing at your site in a quiet moment, and it slows the page. If video earns its place, it loads muted and on a tap.

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08 Sources + further reading

Each source below was opened on 29 November 2026, and the checklist says of it only what it says.

- Competition and Markets Authority, CMA orders the AA and BSM driving schools to refund learner drivers over drip pricing, 15 April 2026, checked 29 November 2026 · `gov.uk/government/news/cma-orders-the-aa-and-bsm-driving-schools-to-refund-learner-drivers-over-drip-pricing`
- Consumer Rights Act 2015, Schedule 2, Part 1, paragraphs 4 and 5, checked 29 November 2026 · `legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/15/schedule/2`
- Google Business Profile Help, Tips to improve your local ranking on Google, checked 29 November 2026 · `support.google.com/business/answer/7091`
- Google Business Profile Help, Verify your business on Google, checked 29 November 2026 · `support.google.com/business/answer/7107242`

If you would rather we did it

Everything in this checklist is yours to use as it stands. If you would rather we built the booking flow and connected it to the system you already use, tell us what you need at `veryseoly.com/contact` and we will send you a written quote.